

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

20 North Avenue, Riviera

✉ P.O. Box 87406, Houghton, 2041

☎ 011-646-6020 📠 011-486-2214

🌐 www.oxfordshul.com 📧 info@oxfordshul.com

📘 facebook.com/oxfordshul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

August 2017

Av & Elul 5777

SHABBAT TIMES

🔊 Parasha - 🕯️ Candle Lighting
🕯️ Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)
For service times see page 3

18 & 19 August – 27 Av

🔊 Re'eh

🕯️ 5:31 – 🕯️ 6:22

25 & 26 August – 4 Elul

🔊 Shoftim

🕯️ 5:34 – 🕯️ 6:24

1 & 2 September – 11 Elul

🔊 Ki Teitze

🕯️ 5:37 – 🕯️ 6:27

8 & 9 September – 18 Elul

🔊 Ki Tavo

🕯️ 5:40 – 🕯️ 6:30

15 & 16 September – 25 Elul

🔊 Nitzavim & Vayelech

🕯️ 5:43 – 🕯️ 6:32

RABBI'S MESSAGE

I have just returned from accompanying Torah Academy's Grade 11 learners on their annual Cycalive tour to Durban. It is always heart-warming to watch the barriers melt away between my students and their counterparts from Israel, who come out from the Beit Shemesh area to join, as well as the mutual cultural discovery between the Jewish participants and the fellow riders from Soweto and Orange Farm. An additional bonus is to travel at bicycle speed (average 15km/h) through some of the finest scenery our country has to offer.

Starting in Johannesburg, altitude 1750m, and ending at sea level, it is fair to say that the ride is downhill. But that is only true of the overall journey. In between us and KZN stand the formidable Drakensberg, with challenging mountain passes to navigate even when motoring and outright gruelling when on a bike. The famous Comrades Route through the Valley of a Thousand Hills linking Pietermaritzburg and the final destination is likewise forbidding.

The journey thus consists of numerous ups and downs. Through the rear-view mirrors, if I am sitting in the lead car, or windscreen, if I am in the rear support vehicle, I watch the riders navigate the uphill's and downhills of their respective shifts.

There are riders and riders. Some choose to free wheel down the slopes, giving their tired legs a rest. But most downs are followed by inclines and when the climb begins they struggle to regain the momentum and battle to stay with the group further up the hill. The ingenious ones know to continue pedalling at a constant speed, irrespective of terrain, and to adjust their gears accordingly. When the road changes to an upward

stretch they have sufficient momentum and speed to continue trucking on, albeit in a lower gear, successfully reaching the top.

Is life not a road, a continuum of easy downhills followed by challenging uphill's? How do we go through life? What kind of rider are we?

We can choose to coast when the road is smooth and downhill, when things are going easy, letting things just flow and putting in little effort. But how will we cope when the going gets tough and when life throws us those arduous uphill's? Accustomed to just taking it as it comes, we are unequipped with the tools to deal with the difficulties that life will inevitably send our way.

The key is to keep cycling. To realise that in real life, if we are not putting in effort to keep a forward thrust then we are actually going backwards. If we are heading in the right direction, in the habit of always putting in maximum effort, then the hills, arduous as they may be, will never be unsurmountable.

Keep pedalling!

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I parked my car – and slowly got out. It was almost the end of a long day of work, lift schemes and shopping. There were still so many things I planned to do in the next few hours before I could go to bed for the night.

My head felt heavy on my neck – I carried the world on my shoulders.

Then I breathed in, and for the first time this season I got a whiff of jasmine. I love the smell of jasmine. In fact, like so many other Joburger's, my mood is very affected by the seasons and the weather.

Miserable weather makes me miserable but a cold crisp day, with a blue sky and the sun shining makes me feel upbeat and happy.

Even more than the sunshine, I love the smell of jasmine. For some reason jasmine always smells stronger at night. It's the spring smell in the dark that uplifts me.

So often we get bogged down by life, stressed and tense from our ordinary everyday... but jasmine is the fragrance that announces to me that, even though it is still cold and wintry and even though there may be more days ahead that are cold and miserable, there is spring ahead.

It is the smell of optimism and the smell of courage and these days we are starting to smell the jasmine again.

Have a good month

Rivky

A STORY

How I Reacted When My Phone Broke

*by Nechemia Schusterman
(Chabad.org)*

While I was out of town this past weekend, my cell phone rebelled. First it played with me by pretending to remain charged at 100% far past the point when that was even possible, and then it died. I tried to resuscitate it, and gave it a fresh round of CPR (cell phone repair), but alas, it had breathed its last.

The problem was that I was in the Jewish Alps, the Borscht Belt—also known as the Catskills. I am now an expert on cell phone repair options within most of those 100 miles: in a word, none.

I began going through the stages of grief. I called my therapist (on someone else's phone, of course), and he was not sympathetic enough, so I fired him. I figured I would rough this tragedy all by myself. It would be Tuesday, a five-day delay, until I could get it fixed (without ruining my family trip by spending an entire day addressing the issue), and one of those days was Shabbat, when I don't even use my phone. So, all in all, I figured I could do it—a four-day break from my phone.

It turns out I am an addict. All the things the experts say about our addiction to cell phones are true. I couldn't function for the first day. There was this involuntary jerking motion of my right hand to my side where my phone holster lives, and it didn't matter that I knew my phone wasn't there.

I couldn't drive, because how can you get anywhere

without GPS? Follow directions and street signs? So 1990s.

I couldn't find my wife and kids, because that would require me to actually get up and look for them, versus the completely normal thing: texting them "where r u?"

It got progressively worse. I had a few spare minutes when I wasn't doing something that filled my brain, and that right arm did its thing again, with the aim of scrolling through Facebook or Instagram, and with no phone I was stuck there, in the mountains, with only my thoughts. Oy!

I started getting sweats and other ailments, as more and more of my life unravelled with my inability to function like a normal human being without my phone.

I mean, even my jog, which is one of my joys on vacation, was ruined, since I actually had to look and breathe and be mindful of what was around me. Looking at gorgeous scenery, tall trees, and fields of green grass as far as the eye could see, rivers and dams and other natural beauty was all I could do. If only my phone was working, I could drown these sights out with music, or better, important news about what new crisis was happening in Washington.

Well, day three arrived and a weird thing happened. I guess I was detoxing, but I stopped missing my phone. And that's when the really crazy stuff happened.

Turns out I have seven kids, four of who were with us at the time. Turns out they speak and are really great company.

Apparently, if you sit on a hammock with a couple of your children and no phone, they talk and say some of the funniest and wisest things. Shocking, I know, but true.

Turns out, if you don't have your cell nearby, you might find a child of yours and teach that child how to ride a bike. In fact, if your face is not turned towards a phone, that child might even learn to ride that bike in under two days.

I found out more things.

Shockingly, my wife likes it when I look at her when she speaks, and when I smile when she makes a funny comment. My ears suddenly started working, and I heard her when she asked me to take out the garbage.

And it turns out that the miraculous creation around us can actually be seen and appreciated.

Alas, all sad things must come to an end, and my phone, now sporting a fresh new battery, has re-joined my life. However, this near-death experience has taught me that it might just be time to slow down and smell the roses, and perhaps leave the phone at home by mistake/on purpose more often and allow my phone-sickness to heal a bit.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches us that G-d guides the steps of humanity, meaning that wherever we are and whatever we experience are paths to learning and growth.

Needless to say, the obvious lesson from my trauma (since I have my phone back, I find myself returning to my sinful ways) is

to work on our collective phone addictions.

However, on a deeper level, as we down and smell the roses near the holy month of Elul, a month dedicated to introspection, perhaps we need to orchestrate phone-down times—not just on Shabbat, but in our day-to-day lives—so that we can live in the mundane world without the natural mundane distractions.

Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur—the holiness of these days teaches us to live on a higher level. The real goal of these days, however, is to bring that higher level down into the mundane world.

Elul, the month that is an acronym for the verse in Song of Songs Ani LeDodi VeDodi Li, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine,” is a time to really take a look at our Beloved, our Father in Heaven. To truly see Him, we need to put down the distractions. We need to put down our phones, because only then can we pick up the messages!

Quick, let me text that to someone.

The month of Elul begins on Wednesday 23/08.

SERVICE TIMES SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<small>22/08 & 23/08 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</small>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Friday	5:30
from 03/09	5:45
Shabbat	5:15
from 09/09	5:30

As the last month of the Jewish year, Elul is traditionally a time of introspection and stocktaking—a time to review one’s deeds and spiritual progress over the past year, and prepare for the upcoming “Days of Awe” of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

As the month of divine mercy and forgiveness, Elul is a most opportune time for teshuvah (“return” to G-d), prayer, charity, and increased ahavat Yisrael (love for a fellow Jew), in the quest for self-improvement and coming closer to G-d. Chassidic master Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi likens the month of Elul to a time when “the king is in the field” and, in contrast to when he is in the royal palace, “everyone who so desires is permitted to meet him, and he receives them all with a cheerful countenance, showing a smiling face to them all.”

The following are some of the basic customs and practices for the month of Elul:

Each day of the month of Elul (except for Shabbat and the last day of Elul), we sound the shofar (ram’s horn) as a call to repentance.

When writing a letter or meeting one another, we bless one another by including the greeting Ketivah vachatimah tovah—which roughly translates as “May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.”

Chapter 27 of the Book of Psalms is added to the daily prayers, in the morning and afternoon.

The Baal Shem Tov instituted the custom of reciting three additional chapters of Psalms each day, from the first of Elul until Yom Kippur. (On Yom Kippur the remaining 36 chapters are recited, thereby completing the entire book of Psalms.)

Elul is a good time to have one’s tefillin and mezuzot checked by an accredited scribe, to ensure that they are in good condition and fit for use.

During the last week of Elul, in the days leading up to Rosh Hashanah, the Selichot prayers are recited. On the first night they are recited at midnight; on the following days, in the early morning.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Millicent Sacks on the birth of twin great grand-daughters in New York.
- Doris Samson on the birth of a great grand-daughter in Israel.

BAR-MITZVAH

- Doreen Kapesluschnik on the Bar-Mitzvah of her grandson.

ENGAGEMENTS

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the engagement of their grandson, Akiva Moshel to Sara Silverstein of Crown Heights.

BIRTHDAYS

- Millicent Sacks on her 85th birthday on the 3rd August.
- Maisie Ehrlich on her 92nd birthday on the 14th August.
- Maureen Goldblatt on her 80th birthday on the 26th August.
- Hilary Isakow on her 60th birthday on the 28th August.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Percy Bloom
- Miriam Moch
- Cyril Isakow
- Blima Nudelman

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Rose Oskowitz, on the death of her sister, Ailene Sher.
- Molly Ulfane on the death of her husband, Henry.
- Russel, Darryl and Gladwyn Leiman on the death of their aunt, Rhoda Rosenberg.

ELUL

The King is in the Field
Are You?